MIRIAM

by

JOHN G WHITTIER

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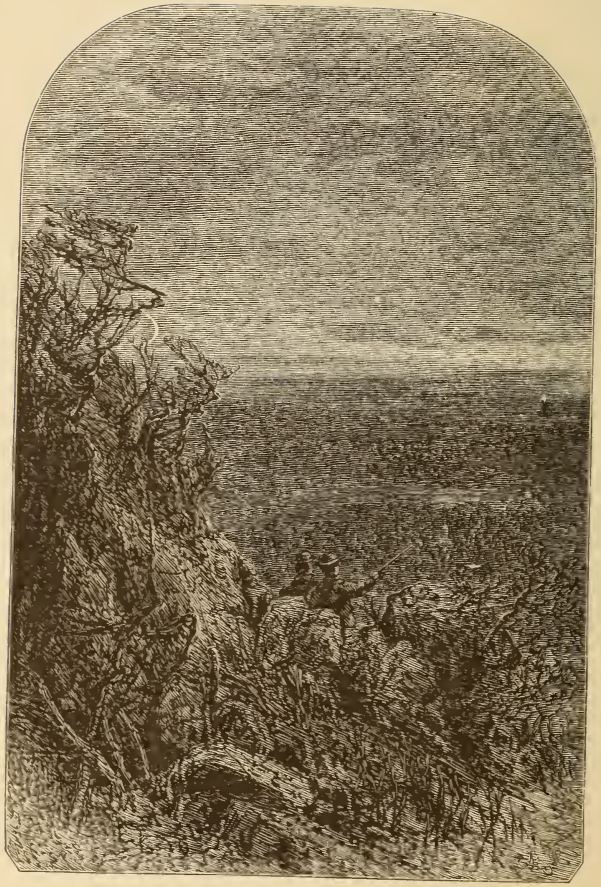

MIRIAM

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AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER.

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TO

FREDERICK A. P. BARNARD.

THE years are many since, in youth and hope,
Under the Charter Oak, our horoscope
We drew thick-studded with all favoring stars.
Now, with gray beards, and faces seamed with scars
From life's hard battle, meeting once again,
We smile, half sadly, over dreams so vain:
Knowing, at last that it is not in man
Who walketh to direct his steps, or plan
His permanent house of life. Alike we loved
The muses' haunts, and all our fancies moved
To measures of old song. How since that day
Our feet have parted from the path that lay
So fair before us! Rich, from lifelong search
Of truth, within thy Academic porch
Thou sittest now, lord of a realm of fact,
Thy servitors the sciences exact;

Still listening with thy hand on Nature's keys,
To hear the Samian's spheral harmonies
And rhythm of law. I called from dream and song,
Thank God! so early to a strife so long,
That, ere it closed, the black, abundant hair
Of boyhood rested silver-sown and spare
On manhood's temples, now at sunset-chime
Tread with fond feet the path of morning time.
And if perchance too late I linger where
The flowers have ceased to blow, and trees are bare,
Thou, wiser in thy choice, wilt scarcely blame
The friend who shields his folly with thy name.

Amesbury, Tenth Month, 1870.

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MIRIAM.

MIRIAM.

ONE Sabbath day my friend and I
After the meeting, quietly
Passed from the crowded village lanes,
White with dry dust for lack of rains,
And climbed the neighboring slope, with feet
Slackened and heavy from the heat,
Although the day was wellnigh done,
And the low angle of the sun

Along the naked hillside cast
Our shadows as of giants vast.
We reached, at length, the topmost swell,
Whence, either way, the green turf fell
In terraces of nature down
To fruit-hung orchards, and the town
With white, pretenceless houses, tall
Church-steeples, and, o'ershadowing all,
Huge mills whose windows had the look
Of eager eyes that ill could brook
The Sabbath rest. We traced the track
Of the sea-seeking river back
Glistening for miles above its mouth,
Through the long valley to the south.
And, looking eastward, cool to view,
Stretched the illimitable blue
Of ocean, from its curved coast-line;

Sombred and still, the warm sunshine
Filled with pale gold-dust all the reach
Of slumberous woods from hill to beach,—
Slanted on walls of thronged retreats
From city toil and dusty streets,
On grassy bluff, and dune of sand,
And rocky islands miles from land;
Touched the far-glancing sails, and showed
White lines of foam where long waves flowed
Dumb in the distance. In the north,
Dim through their misty hair, looked forth
The space-dwarfed mountains to the sea,
From mystery to mystery!

So, sitting on that green hill-slope,
We talked of human life, its hope
And fear, and unsolved doubts, and what

It might have been, and yet was not.
And, when at last the evening air
Grew sweeter for the bells of prayer
Ringing in steeples far below,
We watched the people churchward go,
Each to his place, as if thereon
The true shekinah only shone;
And my friend queried how it came
To pass that they who owned the same
Great Master still could not agree
To worship Him in company.
Then, broadening in his thought, he ran
Over the whole vast field of man, —
The varying forms of faith and creed
That somehow served the holders' need;
In which, unquestioned, undenied,
Uncounted millions lived and died;

The bibles of the ancient folk,
Through which the heart of nations spoke ;
The old moralities which lent
To home its sweetness and content,
And rendered possible to bear
The life of peoples everywhere :
And asked if we, who boast of light,
Claim not a too exclusive right
To truths which must for all be meant,
Like rain and sunshine freely sent.
In bondage to the letter still,
We give it power to cramp and kill, —
To tax God's fulness with a scheme
Narrower than Peter's house-top dream,
His wisdom and his love with plans
Poor and inadequate as man's.
It must be that He witnesses

Somehow to all men that He is:
That something of His saving grace
Reaches the lowest of the race,
Who, through strange creed and rite, may draw
The hints of a diviner law.
We walk in clearer light; — but then,
Is He not God? — are they not men?
Are His responsibilities
For us alone and not for these?

And I made answer: "Truth is one;
And, in all lands beneath the sun,
Whoso hath eyes to see may see
The tokens of its unity.
No scroll of creed its fulness wraps,
We trace it not by school-boy maps,
Free as the sun and air it is

Of latitudes and boundaries.
In Vedic verse, in dull Korán,
Are messages of good to man;
The angels to our Aryan sires
Talked by the earliest household fires;
The prophets of the elder day,
The slant-eyed sages of Cathay,
Read not the riddle all amiss
Of higher life evolved from this.

"Nor doth it lessen what He taught,
Or make the gospel Jesus brought
Less precious, that His lips retold
Some portion of that truth of old;
Denying not the proven seers,
The tested wisdom of the years;
Confirming with his own impress

The common law of righteousness.
We search the world for truth; we cull
The good, the pure, the beautiful
From graven stone and written scroll,
From all old flower-fields of the soul;
And, weary seekers of the best,
We come back laden from our quest,
To find that all the sages said
Is in the Book our mothers read,
And all our treasure of old thought
In His harmonious fulness wrought
Who gathers in one sheaf complete
The scattered blades of God's sown wheat,
The common growth that maketh good
His all-embracing Fatherhood.

"Wherever through the ages rise

The altars of self-sacrifice,
Where love its arms has opened wide,
Or man for man has calmly died,
I see the same white wings outspread
That hovered o'er the Master's head!
Up from undated time they come,
The martyr souls of heathendom,
And to His cross and passion bring
Their fellowship of suffering.
I trace His presence in the blind
Pathetic gropings of my kind,—
In prayers from sin and sorrow wrung,
In cradle-hymns of life they sung,
Each, in its measure, but a part
Of the unmeasured Over-Heart;
And with a stronger faith confess
The greater that it owns the less.

Good cause it is for thankfulness
That the world-blessing of His life
With the long past is not at strife;
That the great marvel of His death
To the one order witnesseth,
No doubt of changeless goodness wakes,
No link of cause and sequence breaks,
But, one with nature, rooted is
In the eternal verities;
Whereby, while differing in degree
As finite from infinity,
The pain and loss for others borne,
Love's crown of suffering meekly worn,
The life man giveth for his friend
Become vicarious in the end;
Their healing place in nature take,
And make life sweeter for their sake.

"So welcome I from every source
The tokens of that primal Force,
Older than heaven itself, yet new
As the young heart it reaches to,
Beneath whose steady impulse rolls
The tidal wave of human souls;
Guide, comforter, and inward word,
The eternal spirit of the Lord!
Nor fear I aught that science brings
From searching through material things;
Content to let its glasses prove,
Not by the letter's oldness move,
The myriad worlds on worlds that course
The spaces of the universe;
Since everywhere the Spirit walks
The garden of the heart, and talks
With man, as under Eden's trees,

In all his varied languages.
Why mourn above some hopeless flaw
In the stone tables of the law,
When scripture every day afresh
Is traced on tablets of the flesh?
By inward sense, by outward signs,
God's presence still the heart divines;
Through deepest joy of Him we learn,
In sorest grief to Him we turn,
And reason stoops its pride to share
The child-like instinct of a prayer."

And then, as is my wont, I told
A story of the days of old,
Not found in printed books, — in sooth,
A fancy, with slight hint of truth,
Showing how differing faiths agree

In one sweet law of charity.
Meanwhile the sky had golden grown,
Our faces in its glory shone;
But shadows down the valley swept,
And gray below the ocean slept,
As time and space I wandered o'er
To tread the Mogul's marble floor,
And see a fairer sunset fall
On Jumna's wave and Agra's wall.

THE good Shah Akbar (peace be his alway!)
Came forth from the Divan at close of day
Bowed with the burden of his many cares,
Worn with the hearing of unnumbered prayers, —
Wild cries for justice, the importunate
Appeals of greed and jealousy and hate,

And all the strife of sect and creed and rite,
Santon and Gouroo waging holy fight:
For the wise monarch, claiming not to be
Allah's avenger, left his people free,
With a faint hope, his Book scarce justified,
That all the paths of faith, though severed wide,
O'er which the feet of prayerful reverence passed,
Met at the gate of Paradise at last.

He sought an alcove of his cool hareem,
Where, far beneath, he heard the Jumna's stream
Lapse soft and low along his palace wall,
And all about the cool sound of the fall
Of fountains, and of water circling free
Through marble ducts along the balcony;
The voice of women in the distance sweet,
And, sweeter still, of one who, at his feet,

Soothed his tired ear with songs of a far land
Where Tagus shatters on the salt sea-sand
The mirror of its cork-grown hills of drouth
And vales of vine, at Lisbon's harbor-mouth.

The date-palms rustled not; the peepul laid
Its topmost boughs against the balustrade,
Motionless as the mimic leaves and vines
That, light and graceful as the shawl-designs
Of Delhi or Umritsir, twined in stone;
And the tired monarch, who aside had thrown
The day's hard burden, sat from care apart,
And let the quiet steal into his heart
From the still hour. Below him Agra slept,
By the long light of sunset overswept:
The river flowing through a level land,
By mango-groves and banks of yellow sand,

Skirted with lime and orange, gay kiosks,
Fountains at play, tall minarets of mosques,
Fair pleasure-gardens, with their flowering trees
Relieved against the mournful cypresses;
And, air-poised lightly as the blown sea-foam,
The marble wonder of some holy dome
Hung a white moonrise over the still wood,
Glassing its beauty in a stiller flood.

Silent the monarch gazed, until the night
Swift-falling hid the city from his sight,
Then to the woman at his feet he said:
"Tell me, O Miriam, something thou hast read
In childhood of the Master of thy faith,
Whom Islam also owns. Our Prophet saith:
'He was a true apostle, yea, — a Word
And Spirit sent before me from the Lord.'

Thus the Book witnesseth ; and well I know
By what thou art, O dearest, it is so.
As the lute's tone the maker's hand betrays,
The sweet disciple speaks her Master's praise."

Then Miriam, glad of heart (for in some sort
She cherished in the Moslem's liberal court
The sweet traditions of a Christian child ;
And, through her life of sense, the undefiled
And chaste ideal of the sinless One
Gazed on her with an eye she might not shun,—
The sad, reproachful look of pity, born
Of love that hath no part in wrath or scorn.)
Began, with low voice and moist eyes, to tell
Of the all-loving Christ, and what befell
When the fierce zealots, thirsting for her blood,
Dragged to his feet a shame of womanhood.

How, when his searching answer pierced within
Each heart, and touched the secret of its sin,
And her accusers fled his face before,
He bade the poor one go and sin no more.
And Akbar said, after a moment's thought,
"Wise is the lesson by thy prophet taught;
Woe unto him who judges and forgets
What hidden evil his own heart besets!
Something of this large charity I find
In all the sects that sever human kind;
I would to Allah that their lives agreed
More nearly with the lesson of their creed!
Those yellow Lamas who at Meerut pray
By wind and water power, and love to say:
'He who forgiveth not shall, unforgiven,
Fail of the rest of Buddha,' and who even
Spare the black gnat that stings them, vex my ears

With the poor hates and jealousies and fears
Nursed in their human hives. That lean, fierce
priest
Of thy own people, (be his heart increased
By Allah's love!) his black robes smelling yet
Of Goa's roasted Jews, have I not met
Meek-faced, barefooted, crying in the street
The saying of his prophet true and sweet, —
'He who is merciful shall mercy meet!'"

But, next day, so it chanced, as night began
To fall, a murmur through the hareem ran
That one, recalling in her dusky face
The full-lipped, mild-eyed beauty of a race
Known as the blameless Ethiops of Greek song,
Plotting to do her royal master wrong,
Watching, reproachful of the lingering light,

The evening shadows deepen for her flight,
Love-guided, to her home in a far land,
Now waited death at the great Shah's command.

Shapely as that dark princess for whose smile
A world was bartered, daughter of the Nile
Herself, and veiling in her large, soft eyes
The passion and the languor of her skies,
The Abyssinian knelt low at the feet
Of her stern lord: "O king, if it be meet,
And for thy honor's sake," she said, "that I,
Who am the humblest of thy slaves, should die,
I will not tax thy mercy to forgive.
Easier it is to die than to outlive
All that life gave me, — him whose wrong of thee
Was but the outcome of his love for me,
Cherished from childhood, when, beneath the shade

Of templed Axum, side by side we played.
Stolen from his arms, my lover followed me
Through weary seasons over land and sea;
And two days since, sitting disconsolate
Within the shadow of the hareem gate,
Suddenly, as if dropping from the sky,
Down from the lattice of the balcony
Fell the sweet song by Tigre's cowherds sung
In the old music of his native tongue.
He knew my voice, for love is quick of ear,
Answering in song.
This night he waited near
To fly with me. The fault was mine alone:
He knew thee not, he did but seek his own;
Who, in the very shadow of thy throne,
Sharing thy bounty, knowing all thou art,
Greatest and best of men, and in her heart

Grateful to tears for favor undeserved,
Turned ever homeward, nor one moment swerved
From her young love. He looked into my eyes,
He heard my voice, and could not otherwise
Than he hath done; yet, save one wild embrace
When first we stood together face to face,
And all that fate had done since last we met
Seemed but a dream that left us children yet,
He hath not wronged thee nor thy royal bed;
Spare him, O king! and slay me in his stead!"

But over Akbar's brows the frown hung black,
And, turning to the eunuch at his back,
"Take them," he said, "and let the Jumna's waves
Hide both my shame and these accursed slaves!"
His loathly length the unsexed bondman bowed:
"On my head be it!"

Straightway from a cloud
Of dainty shawls and veils of woven mist
The Christian Miriam rose, and, stooping, kissed
The monarch's hand. Loose down her shoulders bare
Swept all the rippled darkness of her hair,
Veiling the bosom that, with high, quick swell
Of fear and pity, through it rose and fell.

"Alas!" she cried, "hast thou forgotten quite
The words of Him we spake of yesternight?
Or thy own prophet's, — 'Whoso doth endure
And pardon, of eternal life is sure'?
O great and good! be thy revenge alone
Felt in thy mercy to the erring shown;
Let thwarted love and youth their pardon plead,
Who sinned but in intent, and not in deed!"

One moment the strong frame of Akbar shook
With the great storm of passion. Then his look
Softened to her uplifted face, that still
Pleaded more strongly than all words, until
Its pride and anger seemed like overblown,
Spent clouds of thunder left to tell alone
Of strife and overcoming. With bowed head,
And smiting on his bosom: "God," he said,
"Alone is great, and let His holy name
Be honored, even to His servant's shame!
Well spake thy prophet, Miriam, — he alone
Who hath not sinned is meet to cast a stone
At such as these, who here their doom await,
Held like myself in the strong grasp of fate.
They sinned through love, as I through love for-
give;
Take them beyond my realm, but let them live!"

And, like a chorus to the words of grace,
The ancient Fakir, sitting in his place,
Motionless as an idol and as grim,
In the pavilion Akbar built for him
Under the courtyard trees, (for he was wise,
Knew Menu's laws, and through his close-shut eyes
Saw things far off, and as an open book
Into the thoughts of other men could look,)
Began, half chant, half howling, to rehearse
The fragment of a holy Vedic verse;
And thus it ran: "He who all things forgives
Conquers himself and all things else, and lives
Above the reach of wrong or hate or fear,
Calm as the gods, to whom he is most dear."

Two leagues from Agra still the traveller sees
The tomb of Akbar through its cypress-trees;

And, near at hand, the marble walls that hide
The Christian Begum sleeping at his side.
And o'er her vault of burial (who shall tell
If it be chance alone or miracle?)
The Mission press with tireless hand unrolls
The words of Jesus on its lettered scrolls, —
Tells, in all tongues, the tale of mercy o'er,
And bids the guilty, "Go and sin no more!"

It now was dew-fall; very still
The night lay on the lonely hill,
Down which our homeward steps we bent,
And, silent, through great silence went,
Save that the tireless crickets played
Their long, monotonous serenade.
A young moon, at its narrowest,

Curved sharp against the darkening west ;
And, momently, the beacon's star,
Slow wheeling o'er its rock afar,
From out the level darkness shot
One instant and again was not.
And then my friend spake quietly
The thought of both : " Yon crescent see!
Like Islam's symbol-moon it gives
Hints of the light whereby it lives:
Somewhat of goodness, something true
From sun and spirit shining through
All faiths, all worlds, as through the dark
Of ocean shines the lighthouse spark,
Attests the presence everywhere
Of love and providential care.
The faith the old Norse heart confessed
In one dear name, — the hopefulest

And tenderest heard from mortal lips
In pangs of birth or death, from ships
Ice-bitten in the winter sea,
Or lisped beside a mother's knee, —
The wiser world hath not outgrown,
And the All-Father is our own!

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

NOREMBEGA.

[Norembega, or Norimbegue, is the name given by early French fishermen and explorers to a fabulous country south of Cape Breton, first discovered by Verrazzani in 1524. It was supposed to have a magnificent city of the same name on a great river, probably the Penobscot. The site of this barbaric city is laid down on a map published at Antwerp in 1570. In 1604 Champlain sailed in search of the Northern Eldorado, twenty-two leagues up the Penobscot from the Isle Haute. He supposed the river to be that of Norembega, but wisely came to the conclusion that those travellers who told of the great city had never seen it. He saw no evidences of anything like civilization, but mentions the finding of a cross, very old and mossy, in the woods.]

THE winding way the serpent takes
The mystic water took,
From where, to count its beaded lakes,
The forest sped its brook.

A narrow space 'twixt shore and shore,
For sun or stars to fall,
While evermore, behind, before,
Closed in the forest wall.

The dim wood hiding underneath
Wan flowers without a name;
Life tangled with decay and death,
League after league the same.

Unbroken over swamp and hill
The rounding shadow lay,
Save where the river cut at will
A pathway to the day.

Beside that track of air and light,
Weak as a child unweaned,

At shut of day a Christian knight
Upon his henchman leaned.

The embers of the sunset's fires
Along the clouds burned down;
"I see," he said, "the domes and spires
Of Norembega town."

"Alack! the domes, O master mine,
Are golden clouds on high;
Yon spire is but the branchless pine
That cuts the evening sky."

"O hush and hark! What sounds are these
But chants and holy hymns?"
"Thou hear'st the breeze that stirs the trees
Through all their leafy limbs."

"Is it a chapel bell that fills
The air with its low tone?"
"Thou hear'st the tinkle of the rills,
The insect's vesper drone."

"The Christ be praised! — He sets for me
A blessed cross in sight!"
"Now, nay, 't is but yon blasted tree
With two gaunt arms outright!"

"Be it wind so sad or tree so stark,
It mattereth not, my knave;
Methinks to funeral hymns I hark,
The cross is for my grave!

"My life is sped; I shall not see
My home-set sails again;

The sweetest eyes of Normandie
Shall watch for me in vain.

"Yet onward still to ear and eye
The baffling marvel calls;
I fain would look before I die
On Norembega's walls.

"So, haply, it shall be thy part
At Christian feet to lay
The mystery of the desert's heart
My dead hand plucked away.

"Leave me an hour of rest; go thou
And look from yonder heights;
Perchance the valley even now
Is starred with city lights."

The henchman climbed the nearest hill,
He saw nor tower nor town,
But, through the drear woods, lone and still
The river rolling down.

He heard the stealthy feet of things
Whose shapes he could not see,
A flutter as of evil wings,
The fall of a dead tree.

The pines stood black against the moon,
A sword of fire beyond;
He heard the wolf howl, and the loon
Laugh from his reedy pond.

He turned him back: "O master dear,
We are but men misled;

And thou hast sought a city here
To find a grave instead."

"As God shall will! what matters where
A true man's cross may stand,
So Heaven be o'er it here as there
In pleasant Norman land?

"These woods, perchance, no secret hide
Of lordly tower and hall;
Yon river in its wanderings wide
Has washed no city wall;

"Yet mirrored in the sullen stream
The holy stars are given:
Is Norembega, then, a dream
Whose waking is in Heaven?

"No builded wonder of these lands
My weary eyes shall see;
A city never made with hands
Alone awaiteth me —

"'*Urbs Syon mystica*'; I see
Its mansions passing fair,
'*Condita cælo*'; let me be,
Dear Lord, a dweller there!"

Above the dying exile hung
The vision of the bard,
As faltered on his failing tongue
The song of good Bernard.

The henchman dug at dawn a grave
Beneath the hemlocks brown,

And to the desert's keeping gave
The lord of fief and town.

Years after, when the Sieur Champlain
Sailed up the unknown stream,
And Norembega proved again
A shadow and a dream,

He found the Norman's nameless grave
Within the hemlock's shade,
And, stretching wide its arms to save,
The sign that God had made, —

The cross-boughed tree that marked the spot
And made it holy ground:
He needs the earthly city not
Who hath the heavenly found.

NAUHAUGHT, THE DEACON.

NAUHAUGHT, the Indian deacon, who of old
Dwelt, poor but blameless, where his narrowing Cape
Stretches its shrunk arm out to all the winds
And the relentless smiting of the waves,
Awoke one morning from a pleasant dream
Of a good angel dropping in his hand
A fair, broad gold-piece, in the name of God.

He rose and went forth with the early day
Far inland, where the voices of the waves
Mellowed and mingled with the whispering leaves,
As, through the tangle of the low, thick woods,

He searched his traps. Therein nor beast nor bird
He found; though meanwhile in the reedy pools
The otter plashed, and underneath the pines
The partridge drummed: and as his thoughts went back
To the sick wife and little child at home,
What marvel that the poor man felt his faith
Too weak to bear its burden, — like a rope
That, strand by strand uncoiling, breaks above
The hand that grasps it. "Even now, O Lord!
Send me," he prayed, "the angel of my dream!
Nauhaught is very poor; he cannot wait."

Even as he spake he heard at his bare feet
A low, metallic clink, and, looking down,
He saw a dainty purse with disks of gold
Crowding its silken net. Awhile he held

The treasure up before his eyes, alone
With his great need, feeling the wondrous coins
Slide through his eager fingers, one by one.
So then the dream was true. The angel brought
One broad piece only; should he take all these?
Who would be wiser, in the blind, dumb woods?
The loser, doubtless rich, would scarcely miss
This dropped crumb from a table always full.
Still, while he mused, he seemed to hear the cry
Of a starved child; the sick face of his wife
Tempted him. Heart and flesh in fierce revolt
Urged the wild license of his savage youth
Against his later scruples. Bitter toil,
Prayer, fasting, dread of blame, and pitiless eyes
To watch his halting, — had he lost for these
The freedom of the woods; — the hunting-grounds
Of happy spirits for a walled-in heaven

Of everlasting psalms? One healed the sick
Very far off thousands of moons ago:
Had he not prayed him night and day to come
And cure his bed-bound wife? Was there a hell?
Were all his fathers' people writhing there—
Like the poor shell-fish set to boil alive—
Forever, dying never? If he kept
This gold, so needed, would the dreadful God
Torment him like a Mohawk's captive stuck
With slow-consuming splinters? Would the saints
And the white angels dance and laugh to see him
Burn like a pitch-pine torch? His Christian garb
Seemed falling from him; with the fear and shame
Of Adam naked at the cool of day,
He gazed around. A black snake lay in coil
On the hot sand, a crow with sidelong eye
Watched from a dead bough. All his Indian lore

Of evil blending with a convert's faith
In the supernal terrors of the Book,
He saw the Tempter in the coiling snake
And ominous, black-winged bird ; and all the while
The low rebuking of the distant waves
Stole in upon him like the voice of God
Among the trees of Eden. Girding up
His soul's loins with a resolute hand, he thrust
The base thought from him : "Nauhaught, be a man !
Starve, if need be ; but, while you live, look out
From honest eyes on all men, unashamed.
God help me ! I am deacon of the church,
A baptized, praying Indian ! Should I do
This secret meanness, even the barken knots
Of the old trees would turn to eyes to see it,
The birds would tell of it, and all the leaves

Whisper above me: 'Nauhaught is a thief!'
The sun would know it, and the stars that hide
Behind his light would watch me, and at night
Follow me with their sharp, accusing eyes.
Yea, thou, God, seest me!" Then Nauhaught drew
Closer his belt of leather, dulling thus
The pain of hunger, and walked bravely back
To the brown fishing-hamlet by the sea;
And, pausing at the inn-door, cheerily asked:
"Who hath lost aught to-day?"

"I," said a voice;

'Ten golden pieces, in a silken purse,
My daughter's handiwork." He looked, and lo!
One stood before him in a coat of frieze,
And the glazed hat of a seafaring man,
Shrewd-faced, broad-shouldered, with no trace of wings.

Marvelling, he dropped within the stranger's hand
The silken web, and turned to go his way.
But the man said: "A tithe at least is yours;
Take it in God's name as an honest man."
And as the deacon's dusky fingers closed
Over the golden gift, "Yea, in God's name
I take it, with a poor man's thanks," he said.

So down the street that, like a river of sand,
Ran, white in sunshine, to the summer sea,
He sought his home, singing and praising God;
And when his neighbors in their careless way
Spoke of the owner of the silken purse —
A Wellfleet skipper, known in every port
That the Cape opens in its sandy wall —
He answered, with a wise smile, to himself:
'I saw the angel where they see a man."

IN SCHOOL-DAYS.

STILL sits the school-house by the road,
A ragged beggar sunning;
Around it still the sumachs grow,
And blackberry vines are running.

Within, the master's desk is seen,
Deep scarred by raps official;
The warping floor, the battered seats,
The jack-knife's carved initial;

The charcoal frescos on its wall;
Its door's worn sill, betraying
The feet that, creeping slow to school,
Went storming out to playing!

Long years ago a winter sun
Shone over it at setting;
Lit up its western window-panes,
And low eaves' icy fretting.

It touched the tangled golden curls,
And brown eyes full of grieving,
Of one who still her steps delayed
When all the school were leaving.

For near her stood the little boy
Her childish favor singled;
His cap pulled low upon a face
Where pride and shame were mingled.

Pushing with restless feet the snow
To right and left, he lingered; —

As restlessly her tiny hands
The blue-checked apron fingered.

He saw her lift her eyes; he felt
The soft hand's light caressing,
And heard the tremble of her voice,
As if a fault confessing.

"I 'm sorry that I spelt the word:
I hate to go above you,
Because," — the brown eyes lower fell, —
"Because, you see, I love you!"

Still memory to a gray-haired man
That sweet child-face is showing.
Dear girl! the grasses on her grave
Have forty years been growing!

He lives to learn, in life's hard school,
How few who pass above him
Lament their triumph and his loss,
Like her, — because they love him.

GARIBALDI.

IN trance and dream of old, God's prophet saw
The casting down of thrones. Thou, watching lone
The hot Sardinian coast-line, hazy-hilled,
Where, fringing round Caprera's rocky zone
With foam, the slow waves gather and withdraw,
Behold'st the vision of the seer fulfilled,
And hear'st the sea-winds burdened with a sound
Of falling chains, as, one by one, unbound,
The nations lift their right hands up and swear
Their oath of freedom. From the chalk-white wall
Of England, from the black Carpathian range,

Along the Danube and the Theiss, through all
The passes of the Spanish Pyrenees,
And from the Seine's thronged banks, a murmur strange
And glad floats to thee o'er thy summer seas
On the salt wind that stirs thy whitening hair,—
The song of freedom's bloodless victories!

Rejoice, O Garibaldi! Though thy sword
Failed at Rome's gates, and blood seemed vainly poured
Where, in Christ's name, the crownéd infidel
Of France wrought murder with the arms of hell
On that sad mountain slope whose ghostly dead,
Unmindful of the gray exorcist's ban,
Walk, unappeased, the chambered Vatican,
And draw the curtains of Napoleon's bed!

God's providence is not blind, but, full of eyes,
It searches all the refuges of lies;
And in His time and way, the accursed things
Before whose evil feet thy battle-gage
Has clashed defiance from hot youth to age
Shall perish. All men shall be priests and kings,—
One royal brotherhood, one church made free
By love, which is the law of liberty!

1869.

AFTER ELECTION.

THE day's sharp strife is ended now,
Our work is done, God knoweth how!
As on the thronged, unrestful town
The patience of the moon looks down,
I wait to hear, beside the wire,
The voices of its tongues of fire.

Slow, doubtful, faint, they seem at first:
Be strong, my heart, to know the worst!
Hark! — there the Alleghanies spoke;
That sound from lake and prairie broke
That sunset-gun of triumph rent
The silence of a continent!

That signal from Nebraska sprung,
This, from Nevada's mountain tongue!
Is that thy answer, strong and free,
O loyal heart of Tennessee?
What strange, glad voice is that which calls
From Wagner's grave and Sumter's walls?

From Mississippi's fountain-head
A sound as of the bison's tread!
There rustled freedom's Charter Oak!
In that wild burst the Ozarks spoke!
Cheer answers cheer from rise to set
Of sun. We have a country yet!

The praise, O God, be thine alone!
Thou givest not for bread a stone;
Thou hast not led us through the night

To blind us with returning light;
Not through the furnace have we passed,
To perish at its mouth at last.

O night of peace, thy flight restrain!
November's moon, be slow to wane!
Shine on the freedman's cabin floor,
On brows of prayer a blessing pour;
And give, with full assurance blest,
The weary heart of Freedom rest!

1868.

MY TRIUMPH.

THE autumn-time has come;
On woods that dream of bloom,
And over purpling vines,
The low sun fainter shines.

The aster-flower is failing,
The hazel's gold is paling;
Yet overhead more near
The eternal stars appear!

And present gratitude
Insures the future's good,
And for the things I see
I trust the things to be;

That in the paths untrod.
And the long days of God,
My feet shall still be led,
My heart be comforted.

O living friends who love me!
O dear ones gone above me!
Careless of other fame,
I leave to you my name.

Hide it from idle praises,
Save it from evil phrases:
Why, when dear lips that spake it
Are dumb, should strangers wake it?

Let the thick curtain fall;
I better know than all

How little I have gained,
How vast the unattained.

Not by the page word-painted
Let life be banned or sainted:
Deeper than written scroll
The colors of the soul.

Sweeter than any sung
My songs that found no tongue;
Nobler than any fact
My wish that failed of act.

Others shall sing the song,
Others shall right the wrong, —
Finish what I begin,
And all I fail of win.

What matter, I or they?
Mine or another's day,
So the right word be said
And life the sweeter made?

Hail to the coming singers!
Hail to the brave light-bringers!
Forward I reach and share
All that they sing and dare.

The airs of heaven blow o'er me;
A glory shines before me
Of what mankind shall be, —
Pure, generous, brave, and free.

A dream of man and woman
Diviner but still human,

Solving the riddle old,
Shaping the Age of Gold!

The love of God and neighbor;
An equal-handed labor;
The richer life, where beauty
Walks hand in hand with duty.

Ring, bells in unreared steeples,
The joy of unborn peoples!
Sound, trumpets far off blown,
Your triumph is my own!

Parcel and part of all,
I keep the festival,
Fore-reach the good to be,
And share the victory.

I feel the earth move sunward,
I join the great march onward,
And take, by faith, while living,
My freehold of thanksgiving.

THE HIVE AT GETTYSBURG.

IN the old Hebrew myth the lion's frame,
So terrible alive,
Bleached by the desert's sun and wind, became
The wandering wild bees' hive;
And he who, lone and naked-handed, tore
Those jaws of death apart,
In after time drew forth their honeyed store
To strengthen his strong heart.

Dead seemed the legend: but it only slept
To wake beneath our sky;
Just on the spot whence ravening Treason crept
Back to its lair to die,

Bleeding and torn from Freedom's mountain bounds,
A stained and shattered drum
Is now the hive where, on their flowery rounds,
The wild bees go and come.

Unchallenged by a ghostly sentinel,
They wander wide and far,
Along green hillsides, sown with shot and shell,
Through vales once choked with war.
The low reveille of their battle-drum
Disturbs no morning prayer;
With deeper peace in summer noons their hum
Fills all the drowsy air.

And Samson's riddle is our own to-day,
Of sweetness from the strong,
Of union, peace, and freedom plucked away
From the rent jaws of wrong.

From Treason's death we draw a purer life,
As, from the beast he slew,
A sweetness sweeter for his bitter strife
The old-time athlete drew!

HOWARD AT ATLANTA.

RIGHT in the track where Sherman
Ploughed his red furrow,
Out of the narrow cabin,
Up from the cellar's burrow,
Gathered the little black people,
With freedom newly dowered,
Where, beside their Northern teacher,
Stood the soldier, Howard.

He listened and heard the children
Of the poor and long-enslavéd
Reading the words of Jesus,
Singing the songs of David.

Behold! — the dumb lips speaking,
The blind eyes seeing!
Bones of the Prophet's vision
Warmed into being!

Transformed he saw them passing
Their new life's portal;
Almost it seemed the mortal
Put on the immortal.
No more with the beasts of burden,
No more with stone and clod,
But crowned with glory and honor
In the image of God!

There was the human chattel
Its manhood taking;
There, in each dark, bronze statue,
A soul was waking!

The man of many battles,
With tears his eyelids pressing,
Stretched over those dusky foreheads
His one-armed blessing.

And he said: "Who hears can never
Fear for or doubt you;
What shall I tell the children
Up North about you?"
Then ran round a whisper, a murmur,
Some answer devising;
And a little boy stood up: "Massa,
Tell 'em we 're rising!"

O black boy of Atlanta!
But half was spoken:
The slave's chain and the master's
Alike are broken.

The one curse of the races
Held both in tether:
They are rising, — all are rising,
The black and white together!

O brave men and fair women!
Ill comes of hate and scorning:
Shall the dark faces only
Be turned to morning? –
Make Time your sole avenger,
All-healing, all-redressing;
Meet Fate half-way, and make it
A joy and blessing!

TO LYDIA MARIA CHILD,

ON READING HER POEM IN "THE STANDARD."

THE sweet spring day is glad with music,
But through it sounds a sadder strain;
The worthiest of our narrowing circle
Sings Loring's dirges o'er again.

O woman greatly loved! I join thee
In tender memories of our friend;
With thee across the awful spaces
The greeting of a soul I send!

What cheer hath he? How is it with him?
Where lingers he this weary while?
Over what pleasant fields of Heaven
Dawns the sweet sunrise of his smile?

Does he not know our feet are treading
The earth hard down on Slavery's grave?
That, in our crowning exultations,
We miss the charm his presence gave?

Why on this spring air comes no whisper
From him to tell us all is well?
Why to our flower-time comes no token
Of lily and of asphodel?

I feel the unutterable longing,
Thy hunger of the heart is mine;
I reach and grope for hands in darkness,
My ear grows sharp for voice or sign.

Still on the lips of all we question
The finger of God's silence lies;
Will the lost hands in ours be folded?
Will the shut eyelids ever rise?

O friend! no proof beyond this yearning,
This outreach of our hearts, we need;
God will not mock the hope He giveth,
No love He prompts shall vainly plead.

Then let us stretch our hands in darkness,
And call our loved ones o'er and o'er;
Some day their arms shall close about us,
And the old voices speak once more.

No dreary splendors wait our coming
Where rapt ghost sits from ghost apart;
Homeward we go to Heaven's thanksgiving,
The harvest-gathering of the heart.

THE PRAYER-SEEKER.

ALONG the aisle where prayer was made
A woman, all in black arrayed,
Close-veiled, between the kneeling host,
With gliding motion of a ghost,
Passed to the desk, and laid thereon
A scroll which bore these words alone,

Pray for me!

Back from the place of worshipping
She glided like a guilty thing:
The rustle of her draperies, stirred
By hurrying feet, alone was heard;
While, full of awe, the preacher read,
As out into the dark she sped:

"*Pray for me!*"

Back to the night from whence she came,
To unimagined grief or shame!
Across the threshold of that door
None knew the burden that she bore;
Alone she left the written scroll,
The legend of a troubled soul, —

Pray for me!

Glide on, poor ghost of woe or sin!
Thou leav'st a common need within;
Each bears, like thee, some nameless weight,
Some misery inarticulate,
Some secret sin, some shrouded dread,
Some household sorrow all unsaid.

Pray for us!

Pass on! The type of all thou art,
Sad witness to the common heart!

With face in veil and seal on lip,
In mute and strange companionship,
Like thee we wander to and fro,
Dumbly imploring as we go:

Pray for us!

Ah, who shall pray, since he who pleads
Our want perchance hath greater needs?
Yet they who make their loss the gain
Of others shall not ask in vain,
And Heaven bends low to hear the prayer
Of love from lips of self-despair:

Pray for us!

In vain remorse and fear and hate
Beat with bruised hands against a fate,
Whose walls of iron only move,
And open to the touch of love.

He only feels his burdens fall
Who, taught by suffering, pities all.

Pray for us!

He prayeth best who leaves unguessed
The mystery of another's breast.
Why cheeks grow pale, why eyes o'erflow,
Or heads are white, thou need'st not know.
Enough to note by many a sign
That every heart hath needs like thine.

Pray for us!

POEMS

FOR PUBLIC OCCASIONS.

A SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATION

AT THE PRESIDENT'S LEVEE, BROWN UNIVERSITY,

29TH 6TH MONTH, 1870.

TO-DAY the plant by Williams set
Its summer bloom discloses;
The wilding sweet-brier of his prayers
Is crowned with cultured roses.

Once more the Island State repeats
The lesson that he taught her,
And binds his pearl of charity
Upon her brown-locked daughter.

Is 't fancy that he watches still
His Providence plantations?

That still the careful Founder takes
A part on these occasions?

Methinks I see that reverend form,
Which all of us so well know:
He rises up to speak; he jogs
The presidential elbow.

"Good friends," he says, "you reap a field
I sowed in self-denial,
For toleration had its griefs
And charity its trial.

"Great grace, as saith Sir Thomas More,
To him must needs be given
Who heareth heresy and leaves
The heretic to Heaven!

"I hear again the snuffled tones,
I see in dreary vision
Dyspeptic dreamers, spiritual bores,
And prophets with a mission.

"Each zealot thrust before my eyes
His Scripture-garbled label;
All creeds were shouted in my ears
As with the tongues of Babel.

"Scourged at one cart-tail, each denied
The hope of every other;
Each martyr shook his branded fist
At the conscience of his brother!

"How cleft the dreary drone of man
The shriller pipe of woman,

As Gorton led his saints elect,
Who held all things in common!

"Their gay robes trailed in ditch and swamp,
And, torn by thorn and thicket,
The dancing-girls of Merry Mount
Came draggling to my wicket.

"Shrill Anabaptists, shorn of ears;
Gray witch-wives, hobbling slowly;
And Antinomians, free of law,
Whose very sins were holy.

"Hoarse ranters, crazed Fifth Monarchists,
Of stripes and bondage braggarts,
Pale Churchmen, with singed rubrics snatched
From Puritanic fagots.

"And last, not least, the Quakers came,
With tongues still sore from burning,
The Bay State's dust from off their feet
Before my threshold spurning;

"A motley host, the Lord's *débris*,
Faith's odds and ends together;
Well might I shrink from guests with lungs
Tough as their breeches leather!

"If, when the hangman at their heels
Came, rope in hand, to catch them,
I took the hunted outcasts in,
I never sent to fetch them.

"I fed, but spared them not a whit;
I gave to all who walked in,

Not clams and succatash alone,
But stronger meat of doctrine.

"I proved the prophets false, I pricked
The bubble of perfection,
And clapped upon their inner light
The snuffers of election.

"And, looking backward on my times,
One thing, at least, I'm proud for;
I kept each sectary's dish apart,
And made no spiritual chowder.

"Where now the blending signs of sect
Would puzzle their assorter,
The dry-shod Quaker kept the land,
The Baptist held the water.

"A common coat now serves for both,
The hat 's no more a fixture;
And which was wet and which was dry,
Who knows in such a mixture?

"Well! He who fashioned Peter's dream
To bless them all is able;
And bird and beast and creeping thing
Make clean upon His table!

"I walked by my own light; but when
The ways of faith divided,
Was I to force unwilling feet
To tread the path that I did?

"I touched the garment-hem of truth,
Yet saw not all its splendor;

I knew enough of doubt to feel
For every conscience tender.

"God left men free of choice, as when
His Eden-trees were planted;
Because they chose amiss, should I
Deny the gift He granted?

"So, with a common sense of need,
Our common weakness feeling,
I left them with myself to God
And His all-gracious dealing!

"I kept His plan whose rain and sun
To tare and wheat are given;
And, if the ways to hell were free,
I left them free to heaven!"

Take heart with us, O man of old,
Soul-freedom's brave confessor,
So love of God and man wax strong,
Let sect and creed be lesser.

The jarring discords of thy day
In ours one hymn are swelling;
The wandering feet, the severed pat
All seek our Father's dwelling.

And slowly learns the world the truth
That makes us all thy debtor, —
That holy life is more than rite,
And spirit more than letter;

That they who differ pole-wide serve
Perchance the common Master,

And other sheep He hath than they
Who graze one narrow pasture!

For truth's worst foe is he who claims
To act as God's avenger,
And deems, beyond his sentry-beat,
The crystal walls in danger!

Who sets for heresy his traps
Of verbal quirk and quibble,
And weeds the garden of the Lord
With Satan's borrowed dibble.

To-day our hearts like organ keys
One Master's touch are feeling;
The branches of a common Vine
Have only leaves of healing.

Co-workers, yet from varied fields,
We share this restful nooning;
The Quaker with the Baptist here
Believes in close communing.

Forgive, dear saint, the playful tone,
Too light for thy deserving;
Thanks for thy generous faith in man,
Thy trust in God unswerving.

Still echo in the hearts of men
The words that thou hast spoken;
No forge of hell can weld again
The fetters thou hast broken.

The pilgrim needs a pass no more
From Roman or Genevan;
Thought-free, no ghostly tollman keeps
Henceforth the road to Heaven!

"THE LAURELS."

AT THE TWENTIETH AND LAST ANNIVERSARY.

FROM these wild rocks I look to-day
O'er leagues of dancing waves, and see
The far, low coast-line stretch away
To where our river meets the sea.

The light wind blowing off the land
Is burdened with old voices; through
Shut eyes I see how lip and hand
The greeting of old days renew.

O friends whose hearts still keep their prime,
Whose bright example warms and cheers,

Ye teach us how to smile at time,
And set to music all his years!

I thank you for sweet summer days,
For pleasant memories lingering long,
For joyful meetings, fond delays,
And ties of friendship woven strong.

As for the last time, side by side,
You tread the paths familiar grown,
I reach across the severing tide,
And blend my farewells with your own.

Make room, O river of our home!
For other feet in place of ours,
And in the summers yet to come,
Make glad another Feast of Flowers!

Hold in thy mirror, calm and deep,
The pleasant pictures thou hast seen;
Forget thy lovers not, but keep
Our memory like thy laurels green.

Isles of Shoals, 7th mo., 1870.

HYMN

FOR THE CELEBRATION OF EMANCIPATION AT NEWBURYPORT.

NOT unto us who did but seek
The word that burned within to speak,
Not unto us this day belong
The triumph and exultant song.

Upon us fell in early youth
The burden of unwelcome truth,
And left us, weak and frail and few,
The censor's painful work to do.

Thenceforth our life a fight became,
The air we breathed was hot with blame;

For not with gauged and softened tone
We made the bondman's cause our own.

We bore, as Freedom's hope forlorn,
The private hate, the public scorn;
Yet held through all the paths we trod
Our faith in man and trust in God.

We prayed and hoped; but still, with awe,
The coming of the sword we saw;
We heard the nearing steps of doom,
We saw the shade of things to come.

In grief which they alone can feel
Who from a mother's wrong appeal,
With blended lines of fear and hope
We cast our country's horoscope.

For still within her house of life
We marked the lurid sign of strife,
And, poisoning and imbittering all,
We saw the star of Wormwood fall.

Deep as our love for her became
Our hate of all that wrought her shame,
And if, thereby, with tongue and pen
We erred, — we were but mortal men.

We hoped for peace; our eyes survey
The blood-red dawn of Freedom's day:
We prayed for love to loose the chain;
'T is shorn by battle's axe in twain!

Nor skill nor strength nor zeal of ours
Has mined and heaved the hostile towers;

Not by our hands is turned the key
That sets the sighing captives free.

A redder sea than Egypt's wave
Is piled and parted for the slave;
A darker cloud moves on in light;
A fiercer fire is guide by night!

The praise, O Lord! is Thine alone,
In Thy own way Thy work is done!
Our poor gifts at Thy feet we cast,
To whom be glory, first and last!

1865.

THE END.

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